

Slaves to the Paris "Queen of Pearls"

**The Latest Weird, Romantic Extravaganza of
"Her Majesty," Aimee Gouraud,
Heiress to the Crocker Millions, and
Her Hired Court of Titled
Adventurers, Revealed by a
Noble Courtier's Suit for
Wages Overdue**

"Her Majesty," Who Holds Her
Daily Levee in a Paris Cafe,
Photographed with Some of Her
Magnificent Pearls.

Yvonne,
Known as
the
"Mystery
Daughter"
of Aimee
Gouraud,
is the
Heroine
of the
Remark-
able Love
Episode
Involving
Prince
Miskinoff.

AIMEE CROCKER GOURAUD, "Queen of Pearls," and her remarkable court!

Certainly Europe, and even that Paris which has held the most unique gatherings from every region on the globe, never knew anything that might be compared with it. The court of pearls and diamonds, the court of men of adventure, the court of women of the passing whirl, the court of the cocktail and the tea, holds a place all its own in the annals of the most picturesque town on Mr. Mercator's map.

Now, with the coming of the sunset to the remarkable woman whose romances have girdled the earth, she is again projected upon the screen of the day's news in a suit by one of her retainers, "Count" Ferri Pisani, to collect \$900 alleged to be due him for serving as a courtier at \$150 a month.

And, while she is fighting the suit—Aimee will pay. Aimee ALWAYS pays. Which, one might remark en passant, is the reason why there is a court for Queen Aimee, and why the wonderful figure in Parisian life holds her daily levee for the hungry, the thirsty and the faithful—so long as the favor of the Queen lasts.

Ferri, the latest to sue the heiress to the Crocker millions, was, or maybe is still, one of a dozen men who flutter about the pearl-shimmering throne of Her Majesty, the Queen of Hearts. It is a motley group, strange, weird and unprepossessing for the most part, and its stage setting is more striking than even the ill-assorted throng that makes up the court. If one would come by some idea of its make-up, let him re-read that part of Shakespeare in which Falstaff describes the troops he has recruited for King Hal, after blowing in all of the money given him for that purpose upon sundry wenches of the wayside inns.

The daily levee of the Queen has been held for several years in the cafe of Henri's Hotel, known to every American soldier who ever trekked Parisward. Many years ago an American cavalry officer, wealthy in his own right, and distinguished in the old days when the cavalry was the bulwark against the menacing redskins of the West, retired and went to Paris.

There he had a sort of striker, who served him well—Henri by name. The officer staked Henri to open a little place of his own, and he chose a spot in the Rue Volney, a little, short street that parallels the Rue de la Paix and serves as a passing ground between that street of gay shops and the boulevard beyond. There he opened a hotel, with a bar like those in America, and a tiny cafe that

holds just six tables—no more. On the walls, painters plied their brushes for three paintings. What American officer is there in any part of the land who does not recall the hunter, gun poised and dog alert, who stared at him from the East wall?

Henri wanted a small and paying clientele. He got it. He prospered and the place grew famous. One day during the war the gendarmes came rushing in the front door. As they entered a body crashed through the skylight outside.

Henri was a spy, and he had committed suicide by jumping from the roof just as the French officers arrived to arrest him.

But his widow maintained the place after his death—a cheery, pleasant woman of kindly heart. Aided by "John," the maitre d'hotel, she kept the old machine running. And at a corner table in this little cafe, every afternoon at 4 o'clock, Queen Aimee comes to her throne—a carved oaken chair, in which Ed Hearn, big chief of the Knights of Columbus, often sat for lunch, where many of the officers who led the Americans to victory reposed; where any number of the best known men and women in America have sipped their cocktails and ordered "real American food."

Picture the Queen as she arrives. Time has wiped out the beauty that once held men in captivity in America, in Europe, in Asia, and even along Africa shores. A fat, dumpy residuary legatee to that charm remains. Her ankles are swollen from some organic trouble, and she walks slowly and with difficulty. Under her eyes there are puffs that tell their own sad and pathetic story.

But her dress is of the mode and of the finest texture. About her pudgy neck are strung ropes of pearls that might supply a good part of the German reparations fund, while the presents that the Queen of Sheba brought to Solomon when she went Israelward seeking wisdom, would not have bought the rings that bedeck her once shapely hands.

No sooner is she in her seat than the court appears. There is Gorgoraky, a tall, lank Russian, who seems to have lost something and to be continually looking for it. He hands you a card: "Prince Cantacuzene." And he will show you a picture of himself in a group, dressed in all of the pomp and circumstance of a Russian general.

"Prince!" whispers the ex-prizefighter from Chicago, who is also a member of the court. "He was once Cantacuzene's valet. Aimee bought him that uniform in the picture."

The Prince, however, is the prime minister of the household. He approaches the presence. He bends and imprints a kiss upon the puffed hand, maybe pausing to regard the gems, although, a resident in the house of jewels that Aimee calls her own, he ought to be used to them.

Enter a giant of jovial mien. He, too, leans and kisses the proffered hand. The ex-prizefighter, also a follower of the pearls, follows suit, and turns to the visitor to say:

"You ought to know that guy. He was once a rubber in Fleischmann's baths in New York. Ever go there?" And the train proceeds until a dozen have assembled. The waiter takes the orders. All cocktails excepting for Aimee. For her life holds but tea—the swelling ankles impose a restriction more binding than Mr. Volstead might hope to dream.

The conversation runs in French.

An American newspaper woman interrupts for a moment.

"Can I have a copy of that book you wrote?" she is asking.

"Aimee wrote as much of that book as you did," says the ex-prizefighter aside. The check comes. Aimee pays.

Aimee ALWAYS pays. The courtiers see her depart. Then each goes his way, most of them to spend the largesse of the Queen in entertaining some hoyden of the boulevards or the stage. Aimee goes home. There later, the court will assemble again.

The house, wonderfully furnished, holds a safe that contains a fortune in pearls and gems. Experts say the pearl collection is the finest on earth. In one room the pictures of world celebrities, all personally

Below, Aimee Crocker Gouraud and Her Prime Minister, "Prince" W. Cantacuzene.



The Imposing Entrance Gates at Aimee Gouraud's Paris Home.

given to Aimee, adorn the walls. There is not an inch of space left. Some are daring; some are plain.

In the basement a couple of cooks are busy, preparing for the evening meal, for the retainers will surely be back for "TITAT," and the good old Warsaw, in his king-making days, never had to provide a bigger banquet than the Queen of Pearls sets for her hungry and ever-present court.

Such is the picture that Count Pisani uncovers in suing for his stipend as a courtier at \$150 per.

Time was when Aimee Crocker Gouraud was not fat and slow of motion. Time was when she was grace and loveliness itself. Four husbands and many admirers came to her lot. She married Porter Ashe, millionaire turf king, first; then Harry Gillig, the banker; Jack Gouraud, famed as a Broadway spender and good fellow, was No. 3, and when he died she married Prince Alexander Miskinoff. The three Americans all charmed and held her. The Russian bored her until she was forced to let him go his way in peace.

She was only sixteen when she ran away and married Porter Ashe, and let con- quests since that time have had their

Reginald, the Adopted Son of Aimee Gouraud, and Mrs. Roberta Acuff, Former Wife of David Joyce, the Brother of J. Stanley Joyce, Who Married Peggy Hopkins. Reggy Recently, at His Mother's Request, Broke His Engagement to Mrs. Acuff.

scenes all over the world. The richest and the most treasured of her pearl collection attests the devotion of an East Indian Prince.

As she grew too old for romance herself, Aimee found it through her children. She had adopted two—Yvonne, a girl, and Reginald Devos (also known as Deval), a boy. Both were known as "children of mystery," for their parentage was never made public. Yvonne was the heroine of a remarkable love episode. When her foster-mother and Prince Miskinoff separated and the Prince sued for divorce, Aimee countered with her own suit and named her adopted daughter as corespondent! After the decree was granted, she insisted that the Prince marry Yvonne.

Yvonne later left the Prince, danced on the stage and announced her engagement to a Turk, said to be the son of the late Abdul Hamid. The boy, Reggie, for a while designed costumes for many famous Broadway actresses.

Aimee, the Queen of Hearts and Pearls, is a first-class business woman. Her estate is still rich and she is still looking after it with the old, canny ability.

But her court in Paris—Nothing in the fiction of Don Quixote, in the realism of Hugo, ever touched its peculiar strain.

She is a Queen of her own making; a Queen by might of personality and money, and her reign still holds, to the amazement of all Paris, and of the Americans who flock thither by the thousands to hear the story of the latter days of a woman whose love-hunting ground was the face of the globe.